

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR MOPS, US, VS

SUBJECT: HIEU PRESS CONFERENCE

1. NGUYEN VAN HIEU, "MINISTER OF STATE" HEADING THE PRGDEL TO THE SVN BILATERALS, HELD A ONE-HOUR PRESS CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 14. SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS WERE: A) PROPOSAL THAT THE LA CLLE-ST. CLOUD TALKS RECONVENE NOVEMBER 22; B) COMPLAINT ABOUT FRENCH POLICY TOWARDS THE PRG; C) CLAIM THAT THE PRG WILL CONTINUE TO METE OUT "DESERVED PUNISHMENT" IN RESPONSE TO RVNAF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS; D) CONTINUED STRONG DEUNCIATION OF THE ALLEGED US ROLE IN THE ESCALATION OF MILITARY ACTIVITY WITHIN SVN.

2. TO PROTEST AGAINST RVNAF OPERATIONS AGAINST PRG "TERRITORY" THE PRGDEL WAS BOYCOTTING THIS WEEK'S SESSION OF THE BILATERAL TALKS, ACORDING TO HIEU. (THIS PRESUMABLY CONVEYED THE PRG'S RESPONSE TO THE GVN DEL PROPOSAL FOR A MEETING NOV 16). INSTEAD, THE PRGDEL PROPOSED THE NEXT SESSION BE HELD NOVEMBER 22.

3. ASKED ABOUT HIS CALL ON FRENCH FONMIN JOBET NOVEMBER 13, HIEU DID NOT ATTEMPT TO DISGUISE HIS UNHAPPINESS

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ABOUT THE FRENCH POSITION TOWARDS THE PRG. FRANCE HAD NOT

EXTENDED DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION TO THE PRG, AS WAS THE LATTER'S DUE BY VIRTUE OF THE "TWO ADMINISRATIONS" FORMULATION INHERENT IN THE JANUARY AGREEMENT, HIEU ALLEGED. MOREOVER, FRANCE HAD NOT CHANGED ITS POLICY DESPITE NUMEROUS PRG DEMARCHES URGING THE QUAI TO DO SO. HIEU SAID THAT IF SENEGAL AND THE CAMEROONS COULD RECOGNIZE BOTH THEGVN AND THE PRG, FRANCE COULD DO LIKEWISE. WHEN ASKED IF PRG ACCREDITATION TO PRIMIN MESSMER WOULD CONSTITUTE AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO FULL RECOGNITION, HIEU DECLINED TO PROVIDE A SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE.

4. MOST OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS TAKEN UP BY HIEU'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION IN SVN. HE WENT OVER FAMILIARY GROUND (CF. USDEL JEC 26774), LEVYING NUMEROUS ACCUSATIONS OF GVN "SABOTAGE" OF THE AGREEMENT THROUGH AIR STRIKES ("TERROR RAIDS") AND GROUND OPERATIONS. HE ALLEGED THAT 40 ARVN BATTALIONS IN THE HIGHLANDS AND 70 BATTALIONS IN THE DELTA WERE ENGAGED IN THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST "PRG ZONES". TO ALL SUCH OPERATIONS THE PRG WOULD RESPOND BY METING OUT "DESERVED PUNISHMET" OF THE GVN, INCLUDING STRIKES AGAINST GVN BASE AREAS. HIEU ATTEMPTED TO PORTRAY THE SVN POPULATION AS SO INCREASINGLY DISCONTENT WITH PRESIDENT THIEU'S ADMINISTRATION THAT NUMEROUS OUTBREAKS OF POPULAR DEMONSTRATIONS HAD TAKEN PLACE. HESAIID THAT THE SITUATION COULD BE COMPARED WITH THAT OBTAINING IN BANGKOK JUST PRIOR TO THE OUSTER OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT.

5. THE US WAS SUBJECTED TO THE BY NOW FAMILIARY PRG CRITICISMS, BUT HIEU, UNLIKE HIS PRESS SPOKESMAN SAU LAST WEEK, DID NOT MAKE ABUSIVE REFERENCES TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY. HIEU'S MOST EXTRAVAGANT ALLEGATION WAS THAT THOUSANDS OF US ADVISORS ARE OPERATING AT THE HAMLET LEVEL DIRECTING PACIFICATION AND SECURITY OPERATIONS, IN ADDITION TO SOME TWEVE THOUSAND ADVISORS WITH THE DEFENSE MINISTRY AND RVNAF UNITS.

6. COMMENT: RELIABLE OBSERVERS DESCRIBED HIEU'S APPEARANCE AS "FORLORN" AND SAID THAT HE FAILED TO REPLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARTICULATLEY TO A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS. AMONG THE LATTER WERE SCH SUBJECTS AS PRG VIEWS ON RECONVENING THE PARIS CONFERENCE, THE SIGNIFICANCE FOR SVN OF US PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO PEKING, AND THE PRECISE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THEAGREEMENT AND JOINT COMMUNIQUE. END COMMENT. MOSSLER

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